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Straight Talk to Laos Ally: Tame or Ugly Arm Boss

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WASHINGTON

The United States yesterday sharpened its quarrel with its free Laotian ally. By evening, the credit of Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, pro-Western Laotian strongman, was sinking fast.

Officials confirmed last night that Averell Harriman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, last Friday had handed down a stern, three-count indictment of the anti-Communist Laotian general in a talk with the Laotian ambassador. Officials also took the extraordinary step of making public the details of this indictment. This virtually amounted to a declaration of no confidence.

On London questions were asked about the role of the C. I. A. in Laos. The Times said it is "deliberately opposed" the official American objective of setting up a neutral government. In the House of Commons, Prime Minister Clement Attlee dodged queries about the U. S. A.

The Kennedy administration denied the reports that a petition request had been made for Gen. Phoumi's exit from the Laotian government. It was a move which has been attributed to Gen. Phoumi, increased Western bitterness at the Laotian leader who is supposed to be actively trying to overthrow the Administration.

President Kennedy late yesterday named the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Averell Harriman, to report to the President that this was a special emergency meeting of officials at the White House. The State Department spokesman said it was a routine

meeting yesterday of the President's National Security Council.

Washington's relations with the free Laotians had hit an unprecedented low due to annoyance with Gen. Phoumi, the central personality in that government.

The steady, well-planned drumfire of criticism directed at Gen. Phoumi marks the first government-wide campaign to either tame him or get rid of him.

Washington has been forced to resort to expressions of stern displeasure because proper protocol would not permit simply asking that Gen. Phoumi be fired.

The criticism of Gen.



Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, leader of the free Laotians, is in good standing these days.

in, centered on three points.

1. Gen. Phoumi had failed to take American military advice to leave Nam Tha. This advice had urged against committing any substantial number of troops to the village of Nam Tha which, the military said, was militarily exposed and, due to extended and difficult supply lines, could be a Laotian Dien Bien Phu. The Americans believe that the Laotian build up at Nam Tha may have provoked the Red attack and led to the disastrous rout of the Royal Laotians.

2. At the time of crisis in Nam Tha, right-wing leader Phoumi, instead of being at his military headquarters, was visiting Phnom Penh and other Asian capitals.

3. Gen. Phoumi has been consistently blocking American-Roanoke plans for the creation of a coalition government between conservative Prince Souvanna Phouma, neutralist Prince Souvanna, and Red Prince Souvanna.

Many officials criticize Gen. Phoumi even more acridly. He has been accused by high sources of Chinese crossing President Kennedy in two instances.

The friction between Washington and Gen. Phoumi is certainly underscored when in Asia. The American press, Asian diplomats are trying to warn the Administration that the Laotian situation would be a disaster if the Communists leave that Washington would lift a finger to help the free Laotians no matter what the Communists do.

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